

What is claimed is:

1. A method for remotely diagnosing a computer, comprising:

establishing communication between a server and a communications interface
associated with a client computer;

establishing communication between a client application operating on said client
computer and said server;

in response to a signal associated with said communications interface and
received by said server, downloading a first diagnostic tool from said server to said client
application;

executing said first diagnostic tool;

returning a result from said client application to said server; and

returning a disposition from said server to said communications interface.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein said communications interface includes a
browser and the method further comprising:

downloading a client identifier from said server to said browser;

placing said identifier in a title bar of a browser window;

passing said identifier to said client application, wherein said client application
copies said identifier from said browser window.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

establishing a user record in a database associated with said server corresponding
to said client computer, wherein said record includes a status field;

in response to a signal received from said communications interface, setting said
5 status field to a first value;

executing a second diagnostic tool using said client application in response to said
client application detecting said first value in said user record.

4. The method of Claim 3, further comprising:

in response to a signal received from said client application, setting said status
field to a second value after said step of executing a said second diagnostic tool is
essentially complete;

5 displaying a next page in response to said communications interface detecting said
second value in said user record.

5. The method of Claim 3, wherein said client application polls said server to
detect said first value.

6. The method of Claim 4, wherein said communications interface polls said
server to detect said second value.

7. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

using said communications interface, prompting a user to select a potential
computer problem;

5 in response to said user's input, downloading and executing a second diagnostic
tool using said client application;

returning a result of executing said second diagnostic tool to said server; and
displaying a disposition to said user using said communications interface.

5 8. The method of Claim 7, wherein said server compares said result of executing said second diagnostic tool to a plurality of stored results, wherein each of said stored results is associated with one of a plurality of dispositions, and wherein said server returns at least a first disposition of said plurality of dispositions to said communications interface.

9. The method of Claim 7, wherein said second diagnostic tool traps an error message generated on said client computer, and wherein said step of returning a result to said server comprises returning said trapped error message to said server.

10. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
in response to a signal from said communications interface and received by said server, downloading a second client diagnostic tool from said server to said client application;

5 executing said second client diagnostic tool; and

returning a result from said client application to said server.

11. The method of Claim 1, wherein said disposition comprises information concerning at least one of a list of installed hardware, a list of installed software, a hardware fault, a software fault, a recommendation to perform a maintenance procedure and a source for obtaining further information.

12. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

providing at least a partial inventory of devices installed on said client computer to a user; and

prompting the user of said client computer to identify one or more additional

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installed devices.

13. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

storing at least a partial inventory of devices installed on said client computer in a
database associated with said server.

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14. A system for remotely diagnosing computer hardware and software, comprising:

a server;

a server application program;

a client computer;

a plurality of client diagnostic tools;

a computer network interconnecting said server and said client computer;

a communications interface in communication with said server;

a client application program, wherein said client application program communicates with said server and said client application performs a number of functions, including:

executing at least a one of said plurality of client diagnostic tools, said at least one of said client diagnostic tools being downloaded from said server; and

returning results obtained from said executing step to said server, wherein in response to said results returned to said server, said server application program returns a disposition concerning said client computer to said communications interface.

15. The system of Claim 14, wherein said computer network comprises the Internet.

16. The system of Claim 14, wherein a first of said client diagnostic tools creates a first inventory of hardware and software installed on said client computer.

17. The system of Claim 16, wherein said first inventory is returned to said communications interface.

20. A method for providing a user of a computer with diagnosis of said computer from a remote location, comprising:

establishing a communications channel between a communications interface associated with said computer and a server located at said remote location;

5 in response to said server receiving a first signal from said communications interface, downloading a client application to said computer;

installing said client application on said computer;

in response to said server receiving a second signal from said communications interface, downloading a first diagnostic tool to said computer;

10 executing said first diagnostic tool using said client application, wherein at least a partial inventory of hardware associated with said computer is obtained;

returning said at least partial inventory of said hardware from said client application to said server;

downloading a second diagnostic tool to said computer;

15 executing said second diagnostic tool using said client application, wherein at least a first functional test of at least a portion of said installed hardware is performed;

returning a first result from said first functional test to said server;

analyzing said first result; and

returning a disposition of said computer to said user.

21. The method of Claim 20, wherein said step of analyzing said first result comprises comparing said first result to a plurality of stored results having an associated disposition.

22. The method of Claim 20, further comprising:

downloading a third diagnostic tool to said computer;

executing said third diagnostic tool using said client application, wherein an application resident in said computer is opened, and wherein information concerning the opening of said resident application is returned to said server.

23. The method of Claim 22, wherein said information comprises at least one of a time to load said resident application, an error message, and a time to exit said resident application.

24. The method of Claim 20, further comprising:

assigning an identifier to said computer;

downloading said identifier from said server to said communications interface;

placing said identifier in a title bar of a window on said computer; and

copying said identifier from said title bar to said client application.

25. The method of Claim 20, wherein said step of executing said first diagnostic tool is initiated in response to said client application detecting a first value in a user record stored on said server, wherein said first value is entered in said user record in response to a signal received from said communications interface.

26. The method of Claim 25, wherein following said step of executing said first diagnostic tool a second value is entered in said user record, and wherein in response to said communications interface detecting said second value a next page is displayed.

27. A method for remotely diagnosing a computer, comprising:

providing computer related selector inputs on a display screen including a plurality of the following: a hardware related selector input, a software related selector input, a performance related selector input and an other related selector input;

performing a plurality of the following using the computer: checking at least partially inventory of hardware devices associated with the computer, conducting functional tests associated with a number of said hardware devices, determining performance data associated with the computer, diagnosing software associated with the computer, relying on at least one of said selector inputs, and utilizing log files from test applications associated with the computer to generate diagnostic information related to said hardware devices and/or said software associated with the computer; and developing output information based on said diagnostic information.

28. A method, as claimed in Claim 27, wherein:

said providing step includes selecting said software related selector input and generating a first menu related to diagnosing software.

29. A method, as claimed in Claim 27, wherein:

said providing step includes selecting said performance data selector input and generating a second menu related to diagnosing performance of the computer.

30. A method, as claimed in Claim 27, wherein:

said performing step includes checking at least partially said inventory of said hardware devices, conducting said functional tests associated with said at least partial inventory of said hardware devices and ascertaining whether at least one of said selector inputs was activated by a user of the computer.

31. A method, as claimed in Claim 27, wherein:

said output information relates to at least one of the following: assisting a user of the computer to change the computer, providing a change by said server to the computer and providing a source that can have information related to making a change to the computer.

32. A method, as claimed in Claim 31 wherein:

said output information includes at least one of the following: web site link information, telephone link information, customer help line link information, telephone support link information and a software patch.

33. A method, as claimed in Claim 27, further comprising:

assigning an identifier to the computer;

providing said identifier to a communications interface associated with the computer; and

providing said identifier to a client application that is executable using the computer.

34. A method, as claimed in Claim 33, wherein:

said communications interface includes a client browser and said providing step includes placing said identifier in a title bar of said client browser and reading said title bar using said client application.

35. A system for remotely diagnosing a computer, comprising:

a server; and

storage memory communicating with said server that stores a plurality of the following: a first diagnostic tool related to checking inventory of hardware devices associated with the computer; a second diagnostic tool related to performing functional tests on hardware devices associated with the computer; a third diagnostic tool related to determining performance data associated with the operation of the computer; a fourth diagnostic tool related to diagnosing software associated with the computer; and/or files from test applications associated with the computer.

36. A system, as claimed in Claim 35, wherein:

said storage memory stores a client application that can execute on the computer and also stores a sixth diagnostic tool related to utilizing selector inputs.

37. A method, as claimed in Claim 36, wherein:

a client application is downloadable to the computer from said server and said client application is used in obtaining information when at least one of said selector inputs is activated by a user of the computer and information related to said at least one selector input when activated is provided to said server.

38. A system, as claimed in Claim 37, further comprising:

a first computer that executes said client application and is used to display said selector inputs.